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ALL AMERICA!

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ARGENTINA, PANAMA, AND TO COLUMBIA, ETC.

THE purpose of this brief discussion is to awaken among thinking men more active interest in the twenty resourceful, ambitious, and yet too little appreciated American Republics lying to the south and southeast of the United States. That all of them, from Mexico and Cuba south to Argentina and Chile, are entering upon a period of remarkable progress and development is evident from what they have done and are doing. The ignorance of the majority of the people of the United States and of Europe with their past history, their present achievement, their limitless resources, and their immense potentialities is almost startling. This lack of knowledge is not, however, so surprising when we remember that the northern world has been largely occupied during the last twenty years with its own political progress and the exploitation of its own material resources. If there is a prevailing lack of acquaintance to-day with Latin America, the fault rests with the people and press of the country and not with the Government, for the State Department, under the able direction of Secretary Knox and Assistant Secretary Wilson, devotes almost seventy-five per cent. of its time and energy to the consideration of Latin-American diplomatic and commercial questions. The correspondence, moreover, which is now pouring in great bulk into the International Bureau of the American Republics—an institution devoted to the development of Pan-American comity and commerce—from every part of the world, and the tenor of editorial and descriptive articles appearing to-day in the press, demonstrate beyond question that Latin America as a whole and its salient characteristics are destined soon to be better under-

stood. It is most appropriate now that there should be some special consideration of Latin America, because there is in session at Buenos Aires the Fourth International Conference of American States, which will consider many questions having a direct bearing upon the welfare, prosperity and the common interests of all the American nations.

The enthusiastic and patriotic citizen of the United States, who has not travelled extensively enough about the world to realize that there are some other countries of great physical and economic features, is in the habit of describing this and that characteristic of his city, State or country as "the biggest thing on earth" or "the largest in the world." The man with this habit feels almost stunned when he is told that the entire area of the United States proper from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico can be placed inside of the Republic of Brazil with room left over to hold New York State nearly four times; that out of the Amazon flows every morning several times the volume of water which the Mississippi empties into the Gulf; that, again, down in southern South America the Parana carries to the sea a flood greater by half than the Mississippi; that the city of Rio Janeiro, the capital of Brazil, has expended more money during the last five years in public improvements than any city in the United States with the exception of New York and Chicago and boasts now of nearly a million population; that Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, has one million two hundred thousand people within its limits, and is growing more rapidly than any city in North America with the exception of New York and Chicago; that Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, and Valparaiso, the port of Chile, are expending a larger sum in the construction of harbors suited for the largest shipping of the world than is being devoted at the moment to any harbor in the United States; that Bolivia is building a system of railroads over its mountains and down into surrounding valleys which rival the railroad systems of Colorado; that Lima, Peru, has a university which was one hundred years old before Harvard was founded; that Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela possess a variety of climate and resources, due to their mingling of high plateaus and valleys, unsurpassed in the world.

If, after considering these few facts, it should be desirable to still convince the sceptical and superficial observer, and he wished

further data to form an opinion about the other southern republics, it might be mentioned that the five Central-American republics of Guatemala, Honduras, Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica are the first group of nations in the history of the world to sign and ratify a convention requiring the settlement of all disputes between them before an international court of justice and without recourse to arms, such treaty having been negotiated at the Central American Peace Conference held under the roof of the International Bureau of the American Republics in Washington in December, 1907; that Mexico, under the wise, strong and benevolent administration of General Diaz, has developed such a measure of stability and prosperity that it has invested within its limits eight hundred millions of United States capital; that little Panama, known practically for the sole reason that through it is being constructed the great canal, has large areas of land suited for agriculture and extensive forests awaiting legitimate exploitations; that Cuba, now beginning a new and critical era in its history, is possessed of a climate, soil and possibilities which will make its wealth of the present seem small in comparison to the potentialities of the future; and that the Dominican Republic and Hayti, even though they may have led a somewhat troubled existence, are real garden spots of the Caribbean, where eventually plenty and prosperity must be prevailing characteristics.

Lest this summary just given above should be misleading, and the criticism should be made that too strong a picture was being drawn of the great features of Latin America, it is well to bear in mind that the tendency of the comment and description in the United States and Europe about Latin America is patronizing, not laudatory. We hear too much of the unfavorable side. We are too continually regaled with exaggerated stories of revolutions, of trying climates and of unfavorable environment. If one listens to a group of persons discussing Latin America, the prevailing note is usually one of unfair criticism rather than of just consideration. Instead of always holding the sixpence of revolution and alleged instability of government so close to our eyes that we cannot see the good beyond, let us clear our vision and acknowledge that two-thirds of the entire area and population of the twenty Latin-American republics have been characterized with no serious revolution during the last decade and a half; and that European financiers who do not wilfully make

a mistake are to-day pouring millions of dollars into Latin America for the construction of interior railroads and electric street-car lines in the municipalities, for the development of water-powers and the opening of mines, for public improvements of all kinds, and for the exploitation of agricultural and timber wealth. Conservative opinion in the moneyed centres of the Old World is beginning to believe that investments in the larger portion of Latin America are now practically as safe as they are in the United States, and financiers are backing up this belief by purchasing the stocks and bonds of a large variety of companies doing business in that part of the world. The readiness with which the Brazilian and Argentine loans were bought up shows the growing confidence in these republics. Why not? The annual foreign trade of Argentina, located in the south temperate zone, like the United States in the north, covering an area nearly equal to half of that of the United States proper, and yet having only a population of seven millions of people, is valued at approximately seven hundred millions of dollars, or an average of nearly one hundred dollars per head. There are few countries in the world, even among the oldest and most prosperous, which can show figures to compare favorably with these.

Although Brazil has been somewhat handicapped by unfavorable conditions in the coffee trade, it has held its head high and everywhere gives evidence of great material advancement. Its annual commerce approximates five hundred millions of dollars. Chile, which, if transplanted from southwestern South America to a corresponding position on the Pacific coast of the United States and Canada, would reach from the Mexico-California line north into the very heart of Alaska, has a foreign trade valued at two hundred millions of dollars annually; and it is constructing a great longitudinal railway which will require scores of millions of dollars to complete, and yet it goes about it as if the task were an every-day one. Similar figures might be cited about the other American republics, but only one other fact need be mentioned to prove that all Latin America is making mighty strides in commerce—and commerce is often described as the life-blood of nations. The total volume of the foreign trade of these twenty republics, including exports and imports, approximates now annually two billions of dollars, or a sum equal to two-thirds of the entire foreign commerce of the United States. When it is further

remembered that this represents an increase of one billion dollars in ten years, or one hundred millions of dollars per annum, the critic who looks upon Latin America disparagingly experiences a feeling that perhaps he should change his point of view.

It is not intended within the limits of this discussion to employ the usual arguments in favor of building up our trade with Latin America or to set forth specifically the affirmative and negative sides of government aid to steamship lines, of opening banks controlled by United States capital or of negotiating reciprocal tariff treaties, etc., but rather to develop a keener appreciation of what Latin America actually is. As the real value and quality of a country are measured not alone by its natural wealth, but by its peoples and its institutions, it is well to note some salient characteristics under these heads. And while, of course, there are exceptions, it is undoubtedly true that the average citizen of the United States or Europe who spends much time in Latin America, or takes up his residence there, learns to love and admire the Latins, and to give them credit for qualities and achievements too often entirely forgotten by the passing or superficial observer. The average traveller who makes a rush journey through Latin-American countries sees little of the higher and better-educated classes. He draws his conclusions too often from a certain element of the natives with whom he comes in contact in the more petty details of his travels. If he has time, however, to get behind the scenes, as it were, there is not an important town in all Latin-America where he cannot meet a large number of men and women of superior refinement and charm. If he proves his worth, he will experience a hospitality equal to that given him in any part of the United States or Europe. If he is polite, gentle and appreciative, he will receive a treatment in return that will cause him to carry away most delightful memories.

If there is one quality which makes for real learning, and which the hurry and bustle of our life has caused us to neglect, it is thoroughness in education and study. The average Latin American who aspires to any position of scholarship, or who may wish to become a successful writer, professor, priest, lawyer, doctor or engineer, pursues his studies to an extent and with a thoroughness that, it must be frankly but truthfully stated, is not always characteristic of his neighbor in the United States. Without any reflection whatever on the graduating classes of our

leading universities and colleges, it is safe to contend that a larger number of men graduate from the Latin-American universities with a comprehensive grasp of all the subjects they have taken up than do from the average American high institution of learning. If the standards required for the practice of the learned professions of the twenty Latin-American republics were put alongside the standards required in the forty-six States of the United States, the comparisons would be unfortunate for the latter.

The North-American newspaper man often pokes fun at the Latin-American newspaper because it devotes such a large proportion of its space each day to extended discussions of literary, scientific and legal subjects; and yet, if these features were not included, the constituency of those papers would feel as if they were not treated with respect. It is an open question if it is not better to fill the papers with such matter when it is appreciated than with long, extended stories of crimes and casualties. Newspapers claim that their standards are determined entirely by the people who read them. This argument applied to Latin America is certainly a compliment to its intelligence.

Only recently a prominent newspaper in the United States emphasized "graft" and laxity of morals as characteristics in Latin America. Alas! if there ever was an illustration of the old figure of speech that a man living in a glass house should not throw stones, it is found in the criticism by the people of the United States of "graft" and laxity of morals in Latin America! In view of the constant discussion and evidence of "graft" in the leading municipalities of the United States, it is well to point out that it costs far less to administer such great cities as Rio Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Santiago, Mexico and Havana than it does cities of corresponding size in the United States. And yet in the excellence of their water and sewerage systems, in the cleanliness of their streets, in the quality of their schoolhouses and public buildings, in the extent of their parks and boulevards, and in their adoption of modern sanitary measures they can compare favorably with and even surpass the majority of the municipalities of the United States. A searching investigation of the twoscore millions which Rio Janeiro expended in the building of new streets and docks, of a similar sum which Buenos Aires expended in the building of its wonderful system of wharves, and of the remarkable improvements that

have recently been made in Mexico City, show no such evidences of so-called "graft" as have been found in similar enterprises in the United States. Now and then there may be some local official or a governor of a province of a lesser country who fattens himself on a system of tribute, but this is no longer characteristic of the great resourceful countries of Latin America, and it will soon pass away from those where it is now alleged to be chronic.

In all discussions of the laxity of morals there comes up the one great question of preserving the sanctity of the family. Divorce is almost unknown throughout Latin America, and race suicide is never even mentioned. The average high-class family of Latin America can usually boast of a family ranging from five to ten children. Domestic infelicity, of course, exists, but it does not stalk abroad and make blasé the growing boys and girls of the land. The percentage of Latin-American women of good families who go wrong, to use an expressive phrase, is indeed small. The average Latin-American mother has a regard for the family tie and for the principles of the Church in which she has been brought up which forever protects her from unfortunate alliances. The average Latin-American man is often described as being much more of a devil than he really is! His pride in his family is a strong characteristic, and even if at times he may quietly conduct questionable relations with those outside the conventional pale of society, he will invariably resist with all his strength of body and mind any suggestion that he is not loyal to his family. The divorce records for the city of Chicago in one week will surpass those of all the Latin-American cities in a year. The number of men who live apart from their wives in the United States as compared to those in Latin America is five to one. If the existence of a nation depends upon the preservation of the family, the future of Latin America cannot be considered as in danger.

It is not possible within the limits of this article to describe carefully the educational spirit, the scientific research, the musical fondness, the appreciation of fine art, the literary tendencies, the social finesse which characterize the principal cities and the controlling population of Latin America, but they are well worthy of investigation on the part of the person who would know well that portion of the world. Latin America's historical record is, moreover, so full of heroic achievement and high statesmanship

that it should be better understood in the colleges and schools of the United States. The stories of, for example, such men as San Martin and Bolivar, who gained the independence, respectively, of southern and northern South America, should be known equally well with the great work of our own Washington, from whom these Latin - American leaders gained their inspiration. The story of how each one of these twenty countries won its independence is so romantic and thrilling that the modern educator might often question if it were not better to pay less attention to what was done by the heroes of ancient Greece and Rome and of the Middle Ages and more to what was accomplished by the heroes of our sister nations in modern times.

High society to-day, perhaps, gives more attention to music than to any other form of entertainment, but it does not appreciate the fact that Buenos Aires has an opera-house far surpassing anything in the United States and ranking among the best in the world. The greatest singers go there as well as to New York. Our newspapers are often cited as the best evidence of our splendid material progress, and yet no newspaper in the United States has a plant and equipment more costly than those of the principal papers in Buenos Aires and Rio Janeiro.

Having made these observations on Latin-American conditions, it may be well to call attention to the work that the International Bureau of the American Republics, located in Washington, D. C., is doing for the development of better acquaintance, friendship and commerce among the American nations. The existence of such an institution has not generally been appreciated in the United States because of the simple fact that the American people, up to the time that Elihu Root made his famous journey around South America, had not given sufficient attention to that part of the world to recognize the efforts being exerted by this international agency in Washington to make Latin America better known in the United States and the United States better known in Latin America. Upon Mr. Root's return from his remarkable journey he infused new life into the International Bureau, until now it is accomplishing results for Pan-American commerce and comity never expected a few years ago. Established in 1890 by the First International Conference of American States, which was held in Washington in the winter of 1889-90, and presided over by James G. Blaine, it signalizes the completion of its

first score of years by taking up its permanent abode in a magnificent new building which has been described as a "Temple of Peace, Friendship and Commerce." For its construction all the American Governments contributed, and Mr. Andrew Carnegie gave seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Its cornerstone laying in May, 1908, was one of the notable historical events of Washington. Epoch-making speeches were made by ex-President Roosevelt, ex-Secretary Root, the Brazilian ambassador, Mr. Naluco, and Mr. Carnegie. Three thousand people, prominent in the official and private life of the capital, witnessed the placing of this stone coincident with the raising of the flags and of the playing of the national anthems of the twenty-one nations which have a common interest in this structure.

The celebration of the dedication and occupation of the new building in April of this year was also made notable by addresses of President Taft, Secretary Knox, Ambassador de la Barra of Mexico, Senator Elihu Root, and Mr. Andrew Carnegie, delivered in the presence of a distinguished audience in the noble assembly hall of the new edifice.

The International Bureau is supported by the annual appropriations, based on population, of all these Governments, and its affairs are controlled by a governing board made up of the diplomatic representatives of the Latin-American republics in Washington, presided over by the Secretary of State of the United States as chairman *ex officio*. This board in turn elects the director, who is its executive and therefore an international officer. Its correspondence averages over six thousand letters received and answered each month. For commercial purposes it is in touch in both North and South America with manufacturers, merchants, exporters and importers, doing all it can to facilitate the exchange and building-up of trade among the American nations. On the other hand, it is in touch with men in public life, university and college presidents, professors and students, writers and newspaper men, scientists and travellers, providing them with a large variety of information which will increase their interest in the different American nations. It publishes numerous handbooks, pamphlets and maps. It issues each month a bulletin giving the latest information in regard to the commerce, laws, new enterprises and general development of each republic. The Columbus Memorial Library, which is under the direction of the

bureau, possesses a large collection of books, historical, travel, narrative, statistical and governmental, relating to every American nation, and can be consulted without charge by any responsible person. Nearly eighteen thousand volumes are now found upon its shelves.

In conclusion, it may be fitting to quote from a prophecy made by the writer in an address delivered before the Trans-Mississippi Commercial Congress, as follows:

“Without unwarranted enthusiasm, let me point out to you my confident belief that the next ten years will be a Latin-American decade—that all the world will be then studying and watching Latin America as it now does Japan and the Orient, and that a material, economic, intellectual and political advancement will be witnessed in Latin America which will rival what has been accomplished in the United States. Were it not for the lamentable ignorance which prevails throughout the United States in regard to the peoples, institutions, resources and governments of this section of America, this statement would not seem in the least surprising. Those of us who have travelled from Cuba to Chile and from Brazil to Bolivia are keenly aware that this great onward movement has already begun and that Latin America has entered upon a new era of splendid activity and world-wide influence.

“Twenty republics, varying in size from the area of Brazil, which is larger than that of the United States proper, to Salvador, the smallest, which would take in Rhode Island six times over, having a combined population of nearly seventy millions and a foreign commerce valued at more than two billions of dollars per annum, are going ahead so rapidly that no man can safely prophesy the limit of what they will accomplish during the next ten years. Gifted with a variety of climates and of resources, blessed with a marvellous intermingling of cool plateaus and tropical lowlands, provided with vast navigable river systems and a long extent of accessible coast-line, supplying numerous important products which the rest of the world must purchase, and possessing a people of deep sympathies and high intellectuality based on an old and worthy civilization, they all challenge our best study and keenest appreciation.”

JOHN BARRETT.